

In the United States Court of Federal Claims

OFFICE OF SPECIAL MASTERS

No. 16-1575V

Filed: March 2, 2021

UNPUBLISHED

MELISSA HOWIE,

Petitioner,

v.

SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES,

Respondent.

Joint Stipulation on Damages;
Influenza (Flu) Vaccine; Significant
Aggravation; Multiple Sclerosis (MS);
Neuromyelitis Optica ("NMO")

Braden Blumenstiel, DuPont and Blumenstiel, LLC, Dublin, OH, for petitioner.

Claudia Barnes Gangi, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, DC, for respondent.

DECISION ON JOINT STIPULATION¹

On November 28, 2016, petitioner filed a petition for compensation under the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program, 42 U.S.C. §300aa-10, *et seq.*,² (the "Vaccine Act"). Petitioner alleges that she suffered a significant aggravation of her Multiple Sclerosis ("MS") and Neuromyelitis Optica ("NMO") after receiving an influenza vaccination on November 25, 2015. Petition at 2; Stipulation, filed March 2, 2021, at ¶¶ 2, 4. Petitioner further alleges that she received the vaccine in the United States, that she experienced the residual effects of her alleged injuries for more than six months following her vaccination, and that there has been no prior award or settlement for damages on her behalf as a result of her condition. Stipulation at ¶¶ 3-5. "Respondent denies that the flu vaccine caused petitioner's alleged significant aggravation of her pre-existing NMO and MS, or any other injury; and denies that her current condition is a sequelae of a vaccine-related injury." Stipulation at ¶ 6.

¹ Because this decision contains a reasoned explanation for the special master's action in this case, it will be posted on the United States Court of Federal Claims' website in accordance with the E-Government Act of 2002. See 44 U.S.C. § 3501 note (2012) (Federal Management and Promotion of Electronic Government Services). **This means the decision will be available to anyone with access to the Internet.** In accordance with Vaccine Rule 18(b), petitioner has 14 days to identify and move to redact medical or other information the disclosure of which would constitute an unwarranted invasion of privacy. If the special master, upon review, agrees that the identified material fits within this definition, it will be redacted from public access.

² National Childhood Vaccine Injury Act of 1986, Pub. L. No. 99-660, 100 Stat. 3755. Hereinafter, for ease of citation, all "§" references to the Vaccine Act will be to the pertinent subparagraph of 42 U.S.C. § 300aa (2012).

Nevertheless, on March 2, 2021, the parties filed the attached joint stipulation, stating that a decision should be entered awarding compensation. I find the stipulation reasonable and adopt it as the decision of the Court in awarding damages, on the terms set forth therein.

Pursuant to the terms stated in the attached Stipulation, **I award the following compensation:**

A lump sum of \$200,000 in the form of a check payable to petitioner. Stipulation at ¶ 8. This amount represents compensation for all items of damages that would be available under § 15(a). *Id.*

In the absence of a motion for review filed pursuant to RCFC Appendix B, the clerk of the court is directed to enter judgment in accordance with this decision.³

IT IS SO ORDERED.

s/Daniel T. Horner
Daniel T. Horner
Special Master

³ Pursuant to Vaccine Rule 11(a), entry of judgment can be expedited by the parties' joint filing of notice renouncing the right to seek review.

**IN THE UNITED STATES COURT OF FEDERAL CLAIMS
OFFICE OF SPECIAL MASTERS**

MELISSA HOWIE,

Petitioner,

v.

SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES,

Respondent.

**No. 16-1575V
Special Master Horner
ECF**

STIPULATION

The parties hereby stipulate to the following matters:

1. Melissa Howie, petitioner, filed a petition for vaccine compensation under the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program, 42 U.S.C. §§ 300aa-10 to -34 (the “Vaccine Program”). The petition seeks compensation for injuries allegedly related to petitioner’s receipt of the influenza (“flu”) vaccine, which vaccine is contained in the Vaccine Injury Table (the “Table”), 42 C.F.R. § 100.3 (a).
2. Petitioner received the flu vaccine on or about November 25, 2015.
3. The vaccination was administered within the United States.
4. Petitioner alleges that she suffered a significant aggravation of her pre-existing neuromyelitis optica (“NMO”) and multiple sclerosis (“MS”) as a result of her receipt of the flu vaccine. She further alleges that she experienced the residual effects of her alleged injuries for more than six months after vaccine administration.
5. Petitioner represents that there has been no prior award or settlement of a civil action for damages on her behalf as a result of her condition.

6. Respondent denies that the flu vaccine caused petitioner's alleged significant aggravation of her pre-existing NMO and MS, or any other injury; and denies that her current condition is a sequelae of a vaccine-related injury.

7. Maintaining their above-stated positions, the parties nevertheless now agree that the issues between them shall be settled and that a decision should be entered awarding the compensation described in paragraph 8 of this Stipulation.

8. As soon as practicable after an entry of judgment reflecting a decision consistent with the terms of this Stipulation, and after petitioner has filed an election to receive compensation pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 300aa-21(a)(1), the Secretary of Health and Human Services will issue the following vaccine compensation payment:

A lump sum of \$200,000.00 in the form of a check payable to petitioner. This amount represents compensation for all damages that would be available under 42 U.S.C. § 300aa-15(a).

9. As soon as practicable after the entry of judgment on entitlement in this case, and after petitioner has filed both a proper and timely election to receive compensation pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 300aa-21(a)(1), and an application, the parties will submit to further proceedings before the special master to award reasonable attorneys' fees and costs incurred in proceeding upon this petition.

10. Petitioner and her attorney represent that compensation to be provided pursuant to this Stipulation is not for any items or services for which the Program is not primarily liable under 42 U.S.C. § 300aa-15(g), to the extent that payment has been made or can reasonably be expected to be made under any State compensation programs, insurance policies, Federal or State health benefits programs (other than Title XIX of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. § 1396 et seq.)), or by entities that provide health services on a pre-paid basis.

11. Payments made pursuant to paragraphs 8 and 9 of this Stipulation will be made in accordance with 42 U.S.C. § 300aa-15(i), subject to the availability of sufficient statutory funds.

12. The parties and their attorneys further agree and stipulate that, except for any award for attorneys' fees and litigation costs, and past unreimbursable expenses, the money provided pursuant to this Stipulation will be used solely for the benefit of petitioner as contemplated by a strict construction of 42 U.S.C. § 300aa-15(a) and (d), and subject to the conditions of 42 U.S.C. § 300aa-15(g) and (h).

13. In return for the payment described in paragraph 8 and any amount awarded pursuant to paragraph 9, petitioner, in her individual capacity and on behalf of her heirs, executors, administrators, successors or assigns, does forever irrevocably and unconditionally release, acquit and discharge the United States and the Secretary of Health and Human Services from any and all actions or causes of action (including agreements, judgments, claims, damages, loss of services, expenses and all demands of whatever kind or nature) that have been brought, could have been brought, or could be timely brought in the Court of Federal Claims, under the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program, 42 U.S.C. § 300aa-10 et seq., on account of, or in any way growing out of, any and all known or unknown, suspected or unsuspected personal injuries to or death of petitioner resulting from, or alleged to have resulted from, the flu vaccination administered on November 25, 2015, as alleged by petitioner in a petition for vaccine compensation filed on or about November 28, 2016, and an amended petition filed on or about January 23, 2017, in the United States Court of Federal Claims as petition No. 16-1575V.

14. If petitioner should die prior to entry of judgment, this agreement shall be voidable upon proper notice to the Court on behalf of either or both of the parties.

15. If the special master fails to issue a decision in complete conformity with the terms of this Stipulation or if the Court of Federal Claims fails to enter judgment in conformity with a decision that is in complete conformity with the terms of this Stipulation, then the parties' settlement and this Stipulation shall be voidable at the sole discretion of either party.

16. This Stipulation expresses a full and complete negotiated settlement of liability and damages claimed under the National Childhood Vaccine Injury Act of 1986, as amended, except as otherwise noted in paragraph 9 above. There is absolutely no agreement on the part of the parties hereto to make any payment or to do any act or thing other than is herein expressly stated and clearly agreed to. The parties further agree and understand that the award described in this Stipulation may reflect a compromise of the parties' respective positions as to liability and/or amount of damages, and further, that a change in the nature of the injury or condition or in the items of compensation sought, is not grounds to modify or revise this agreement.

17. This Stipulation shall not be construed as an admission by the United States or the Secretary of Health and Human Services that flu vaccine caused petitioner's alleged significant aggravation of her pre-existing NMO and MS, any other injury, or her current disabilities.

18. All rights and obligations of petitioner hereunder shall apply equally to petitioner's heirs, executors, administrators, successors, and/or assigns.

END OF STIPULATION

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Respectfully submitted,

PETITIONER:

Melissa Howie 12-17-20
MELISSA HOWIE

**ATTORNEY OF RECORD FOR
PETITIONER:**

Braden Blumenstiel
BRADEN BLUMENSTIEL, ESQ.
DuPont and Blumenstiel, LLC
655 Metro Place South, Suite 440
Dublin, OH 43017
Tel: (614) 408-0529
Braden@DandBLaw.com

**AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL:**

Catharine E. Herve
CATHARINE E. HERVE HEATHCLIFF PEARUMAY
Deputy Director
Torts Branch
Civil Division
U.S. Department of Justice
P.O. Box 146
Benjamin Franklin Station
Washington, DC 20044-0146

**AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES:**

CAPT Dale Wislar, D/Sc, for
TAMARA OVERBY
Acting Director, Division of
Injury Compensation Programs (DICP)
Healthcare Systems Bureau
U.S. Department of Health
and Human Services
5600 Fishers Lane
Parklawn Building, Stop-08N146B
Rockville, MD 20857

**ATTORNEY OF RECORD FOR
RESPONDENT:**

Claudia B. Gangi
by Heathcliff Pearlman
CLAUDIA B. GANGI
Senior Trial Attorney
Torts Branch, Civil Division
U.S. Department of Justice
P.O. Box 146
Benjamin Franklin Station
Washington, D.C. 20044-0146
Tel: (202) 919-6599
claudia.gangi@usdoj.gov

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